

*Borrowing Authority*

ment went out and borrowed, helped itself through the use of this Section of the Act to various sums of money. On March 31 it borrowed \$750 million, on April 5 it took another cool billion, on April 14 it took another \$100 million and on April 21 it took \$150 million. The Government has borrowed a lot more since, totalling about \$5 billion according to the records I obtained a few days ago.

Let us deal only with the borrowings up to April 21, because by that time the Government was about to bring this Bill before the House. In borrowing that money, the Government had to pay short-term rates because it was borrowing the money for periods of six months or less. Had it borrowed the money in the usual fashion in long-term borrowings, it would have paid a lower interest rate. The difference between the two rates, for simplification, is approximately 2 per cent. It was about that constant rate of 2 per cent throughout the period.

If we calculate the cost of borrowing the almost \$2 billion over a six-month period, the estimated cost of that differential is approximately \$4 million on a very rough calculation. That is what it has cost the people of Canada for the Government to refrain from calling Parliament until April. In other words, by delaying the recall of Parliament, the Government increased its expenses by about \$4 million and now expects Canadians to cough up that money in extra taxes. Tax Canadians to pay for the Government's folly.

This would not seem unusual—\$4 million after all is peanuts to this Government when it is spending \$147 billion in a year, I acknowledge that—but the fact is it is a cost that could have been saved the Canadian taxpayers. I would not raise it today as a particularly serious matter if it did not add into the list of fumbling and bumbling on financial matters that we have witnessed throughout this session of Parliament, but the Minister of Finance himself in previous statements has raised this cost as something he regards as a very serious waste of money.

I have here some statements by the Minister of Finance that I thought you would enjoy hearing, because, Madam Speaker, these were said of a different time when he was still a Minister but he, of course, was smarting because of further government fumbling and bumbling in financial matters in 1985.

One of the extraordinary things in this country is the approach the business press takes to the Minister of Finance because he is upheld in some quarters as a beacon of reason and right in financial matters. Yet when you look at the record of fumbling and bumbling, one has to wonder why these news editors take that particular position.

**Mr. Blackburn (Brant):** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Milliken:** I do not understand it. If I were Minister of Finance and I fumbled and bumbled as many things as he has in the last six months, I would quit. But he has not seen fit to do that, he is soldiering on, continuing to fumble and bumble.

Let us hear what he said in 1985. Let me set the stage for this. In 1985 the Senate of Canada received a borrowing Bill from this House and it determined that that borrowing Bill ought not be allowed to pass until the Government of the day had tabled its spending plans in this House so the Senate could see where the money would go. Indeed, in accordance with constitutional practice, that position on the part of the other place was perfectly proper and perfectly correct. Yet this Government howled and shrieked outrage at the dreadful actions of the other place in holding up the borrowing Bill. The nerve of the other place, the Government kept saying. The Minister of Finance was at the head of the charge in shouting about how dreadful it was that the other place was obstructing a piece of legislation on financial matters from this House. What he did was calculate the cost of holding up the Bill in the other place on the same basis that I have costed the failure of the Government to recall Parliament in a timely way. As reported in *Hansard* on February 26, 1985 at page 2500, he stated:

Based on the level of interest rates today compared to the amounts of money that could have been raised about two or three weeks ago, and were not raised because of the actions in the other place, the cost to taxpayers has been at least \$10 million. Those are the facts, and I ask him to reconsider his position.

The Minister of Finance was answering a question posed by the Leader of the Opposition.

• (1620)

The Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) was making a speech and he quoted a letter written by the Minister of Finance. As reported in *Hansard* on June 7, 1985 at page 5535, the Minister stated: